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ABSTRACT

Capstone for a Competitive Edge Summer Camp--1989 was a pilot program formed with input by business and industry, rural vocational educators, and the rural advisory council in conjunction with the Arizona Department of Education and the Arizona Center for Vocational Education. The program's primary intent was to meet the needs of rural vocational students in competency areas that could not be met in the rural schools; assist in the development of transitional skills to prepare students for the world of work; increase awareness of high-tech employment opportunities; and promote leadership skills through personal development. A total of 52 students, 21 males and 31 females, primarily Hispanic and Caucasian, attended Capstone. Students were given a problem to solve that would use the latest technologically advanced equipment. Students worked in teams and were assigned to workstations that matched their occupational goal and vocational program (auto technician, desktop publishing, manufacturing, agribusiness management, and concrete farm work). Students participated in group learning activities to promote transitional skills and personal growth. Quality circle training promoted continuous improvement by giving students feedback and linking cognitive and transitional skills. Initial evaluation of the project showed positive change in both the affective and cognitive domains. (KC)

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CONFERENCE PAPER FOR AMERICAN VOCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (AVA) DECEMBER, 1989, ORLANDO, FLORIDA ARIZONA'S CAPSTONE FOR A COMPETITIVE EDGE - 1989 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Capstone for a Competitive Edge Summer Camp - 1989 was a pilot program formulated through input provided by business and industry, rural vocational administrators/directors, rural occupational and vocational teachers, and the rural advisory council under the direction of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) and implemented by the Arizona Center for Vocational Education (ACVE). The program's primary intent was to meet the needs of rural vocational students in competency areas that could not be met in the rural schools; assist in the development of "transitional skills" to prepare students for the world of work; increase awareness of high-tech employment opportunities within business and industry; and promote leadership skills through personal development. Capstone program intervention assisted the rural student in competing more effectively with his or her metropolitan counterpart.

The Capstone program generated information to be used as a model for statewide and national implementation, provided continued professional development for the vocational education instructors participating in the program, and began the process of developing curriculum suitable for the program's goals and philosophy.

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The social context of Capstone promoted the concept of "teams." A Code of Ethics was developed in which successful team performance required interpersonal skills, as well as team members' technical and task abilities. All of Capstone's learning activities were structured around the essential elements of effective teams. Students progressed developmentally through the seven stages of "cooperative learning-groups."

Students were selected for Capstone by their vocational education instructor in the rural districts, and received high-tech skill preparation that they would not otherwise have access to. A total of 68 students applied, and 52 actually attended Capstone. Those that could not attend Capstone were ill or had work commitments. The students (workers) who participated in Capstone were primarily 11th grade program completers, age 16-17 years, 21 males and 31 females, with a large Hispanic and Caucasian grouping. They were representative of the state in terms of their regional distribution. All students selected demonstrated accomplishments in specific vocational education competencies.

Students were given a "problem" to solve that would utilize the latest technologically advanced equipment. The problem solving approach included productive controversy and stimulated high quality decision making. Students were assigned to workstations that matched their occupational goal and vocational

programs. The five workstations at Capstone offered direct skill preparation for Auto technician, Desk Top Publishing, Manufacturing, Agribusiness Management, and Concrete Form Work.

In the area of personal development students participated in group learning activities that focused on "transitional skills" to assist with future employment, and on "personal growth" designed to promote change. Quality Circle (QC) training promoted continuous improvement throughout Capstone by giving students an opportunity to provide feedback to one another, their instructors, lead teacher, and Capstone's Director concerning the quality and direction of their learning experiences. Quality Circles provided a link between the cognitive skill preparation received at workstations, and "transitional skills" acquired through personal development activities. The group activities aligned with Capstone's Code of Ethics. Students successfully produced personal fact sheets, resumes, job applications, and demonstrated interviewing skills necessary to secure employment. Summary comments from students' Quality Circles training indicate a sense of community, belongingness, support, and acceptance had been achieved as a result of Capstone. Students experienced positive change in both the cognitive and affective domains. A follow-up has begun to determine the long term effect on Capstone workers as a result of program intervention. The initial findings indicate that Capstone has had a very positive effect on the Capstone workers affective as well as cognitive skill obtainment.

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